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From the Editor: An Introduction to a Special Issue of Landscapes of Violence: Movimiento por la Paz con Justicia y Dignidad. Tres años (Movement for Peace with Justice and Dignity. Three Years)

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From the Editor: An Introduction to a Special Issue of Landscapes of Violence: Movimiento por la Paz con Justicia y Dignidad. Tres años (Movement for Peace with Justice and Dignity. Three Years)

Keywords

Mexico, collective memory, collective action, testimony, violence, social movement

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Author Biography

Dr. Ventura Pérez is a bioarchaeologist whose research is embedded within a biocultural paradigm. His focus is on the poetics of violence (both interpersonal and institutional) in past and present human populations. His analysis of various types of trauma examines how the symbolic aspects of violence have the potential to create order and disorder depending on the specific social context within which the violence is expressed. Dr. Pérez is currently researching the use of performance violence in pre-Hispanic and post contact Mexico, is a consultant for the Pascua Yaqui Tribe, and is working with Dr. Nancy Scheper-Hughes at the site of Montes de Oca in Argentina. Contact him at vrperez@anthro.umass.edu.

México's current humanitarian crisis has been exacerbated by almost a decade of ineffective anti-cartel and US-México security policies, which have resulted in unprecedented murder rates and remade power relations among political elite, drug cartels, and local communities. The official guerra contra el narcotráfico [the war against drug trafficking] began in Michoacán, México in 2006. Since this seminal moment and throughout the preceding years, scholars have documented policy trends and drug violence within México.

Movimiento por la Paz con Justicia y Dignidad was borne out of the frustration and outrage of the Mexican people to the escalation of violence that was the direct result of President Felipe Calderón's disastrous war on drug trafficking. It was the death of Javier Sicilia's son on March 28, 2011 that was the catalyst for the movement. Juan Francisco was one of seven innocent people brutally killed by hit men in the State of Morelos. His murders were tied to organized crime, and Javier Sicilia, one of Mexico's best-known authors and poets, urged Mexicans to protest against the violence being produced by the cartels and Mexican law enforcement and the military. Javier Sicilia's son's death, along with the collective experiences of grief and pain, moved people to invoke the motto "Estamos hasta la Madre" [We're fed up], which gave rise to the social Movement for Peace with Justice and Dignity (MPJD).

Movimiento por la Paz con Justicia y Dignidad. Tres años is a journey through the history of the Movement for Peace with Justice and Dignity. The original art installation was curated by Linda Atach, director of the Department of the Temporary Exhibitions at the Museum of Memory and Tolerance, in Mexico City. The exhibit was housed in three rooms that focused on the fight against violence, seen from the perspective of three artists' installations. In April 2014, I was fortunate to see this exhibit while conducting research on cartel violence in Mexico. I knew immediately that I wanted to facilitate greater access to this important work.

To that end, for the past seven months the Violence and Conflict Laboratory (VCL) in the Department of Anthropology at the University of Massachusetts Amherst and the Museum of Memory and Tolerance (MMT) in Mexico City have been strategizing how to best facilitate a collaborative project. The first stage of this collaboration is the publication of *Movimiento por la Paz con Justicia y Dignidad. Tres años* in this special publication of *Landscapes of Violence*. This issue is fully devoted to the exhibit, incorporating part of its texts, photographs and videos. This special publication has been published in both digital and print formats.

In this non-peer-reviewed publication of *LoV*, we present the testimonies that the photographer Mónica González gathered together, and which embody the collective sadness that this war against drugs has generated. In our digital format, we include links to her videos, *Geography of Pain* and *Cold Within the Soul*. Mónica González's work was part of the MMT exhibit and her work fits perfectly with our journal's platform and goals. The mission of *LoV* was founded on the principle that a peer-reviewed open access publication could invoke real change if made available to policy makers, academics, NGO's, and ordinary people. Through our publication, we seek to broaden the geographic reach of these testimonies. And, as a result, we seek to generate a transnational collective memory of all those that have been victims of Mexico's drug war, a war that has generated more pain than results.

As part of this special issue of *LoV*, the VCL will host Cordelia Rizzo and Alejandro Vélez as part of a symposium entitled "Mexico & Amherst & Mi Barrio & Tu Barrio. Resisting Death, Creating Memory & Acting in Common in Contemporary Mexico." Cordelia Rizzo is a writer, academic, and human rights activist. Since the Mexican Drug War started, she has been a permanent collaborator of the peace-building collective Nuestra Aparente Rendición and Fuerzas Unidas por Nuestros Desaparecidos en Nuevo León. Her current academic work deals with the right to memory. She will bring quilts (bordados) for an exhibit. These white handkerchiefs were a collective denunciation of the violence designed to provide a name and a story to the dead and missing. They are embroidered with details of names, dates, and circumstances of the tragic conditions of their deaths or disappearances.

Alejandro Vélez is currently the editor-in-chief of the website of the association Nuestra Aparente Rendición where he edited, along with Lolita Bosch, the book *Tú y yo coincidimos en la noche terrible* with the life stories of the missing and murdered journalists in Mexico since 2000. Alejandro got his bachelor's degree in Political Science at Instituto Tecnológico Autónomo de México (ITAM). After a brief experience in consultancy, he enrolled in the Humanities Department of Universitat Pompeu Fabra in Barcelona where got his Ph.D. in 2011. His research was on the consequences of 9-11 from an ethical and political perspective. From 2012 to 2014, he was a postdoc fellow at Universidad Autónoma Metropolitana-Xochimilco in Mexico, where he researched issues related with enforced disappearance in Mexico. He is a guest columnist for *Panoramas*, magazine of the Faculty of Latin American Studies of Pittsburgh University and for *The Missing Blog*.

The goal of this specific exchange is to collectively present the special issue of the journal, while simultaneously facilitating dialogue between the UMass and Five College community and the representatives of the movement in Mexico. In the final stage, the VCL along with support from the Fine Arts Center, UMass, and the Five College community will attempt to bring the MPJD exhibit, first exhibited at the MMT, to UMass in Spring 2016. With this specific project, we strive to bring international attention to both the movement and the complex experiences of violence in Mexico. We are certain that this dialogue will encourage collaborative research amongst students, faculty, and the MPJD, while creating webs of support for the victims. It is our great honor to bring this story and this exhibit to the world with the hope of creating a meaningful dialogue.

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Editor-in-Chief